

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MUSCAT 00663 100852Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----057997 100853Z /10

P R 100800Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4316
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T MUSCAT 0663

EXIDS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, XF
SUBJECT: BRIEFING ON DAYAN AND BEGIN VISITS

REF STATE 114888

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1. CHARGE CALLED MAY 8 ON MR. SADEK SULAIMAN, CHIEF OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN OMANGOV FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND BRIEFED HIM ON DAYAN AND BEGIN VISITS TO WASHINGTON. THE BRIEFING WAS DRAWN EXCLUSIVELY FROM REFTEL, WIT EMPHASIS ON POINTS IN PARA 5.

2. SULAIMAN LISTENED ATTENTIVELY, THEN MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

A. SUG CAN BE ASSURED THAT OMANGOV WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE. (THOUGH SULAIMAN DID NOT MENTION THIS, SULTAN QABOOS RECENTLY REAFFIRMED THIS POLICY IN AN INTERVIEW WITH LONDON'S ARABIC-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER, "AL-MANAR", IN A STATEMENT PROMINENTLY COVERED IN LAST WEEK'S OMANI PRESS.) MOREOVER, SULAIMAN NOTED, OMANGOV APPRECIATES "INDISPENSABLE" ROLE OF USG IN NEAR EAST PEACE PROCESS. IF USG WERE NOT PERFORMING THIS FUNCTION, THERE WOULD BE A LARGE "GAP" IN THE EFFORTS OF THOSE WORKING FOR REGIONAL STABILITY.

B. WHILE SAYING THIS, HOWEVER, OMANGOV ALSO WISHES TO BRING HOME TO USG THE "PERILS" IT SEES IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. POLITICS IS A DYNAMIC PROCESS - "THINGS ARE NEVER STATIC" - AND, THOUGH IT IS ALL VERY WELL TO ASK THE ARABS TO BE PATIENT AS ISRAEL'S INTERNAL DEBATE WORKS ITSELF OUT, THERE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT IN MEANTIME RADICAL OPINION WILL DERIVE ADVANTAGE FROM THE DELAY AND GAIN ASCENDANCY IN ARAB WORLD. IN PARTICULAR, SADAT'S SUPPORT WITHIN EGYPT MAY DISSIPATE. SULAIMAN REMARKED THAT ARAB OPINION TENDS TO COME IN "PEAKS AND VALLEYS". THE CURRENT PROMINENCE OF PRO-PEACE SENTIMENT VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL COULD BE REPLACED BY AN EXTREMELY BELLIGERENT ATTITUDE.

C. IN ADDITION, SLAIMAN WAS SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE CURRENT INTERNAL ISRAELI DEBATE. "AFTER ALL, IT IS NOT NEW," HE SAID. HE WONDERED HOW ISRAELIS ASSESS THE ARAB MIND, AND HE FEARED THAT ALL ISRAELI LEADERS PONDER THEIR OPTIONS WITHOUT TAKING MUCH ACCOUNT OF ARAB
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REACTIONS. HAVIG BEEN SUCCESSFUL AGAINST THE ARABS IN THE PAST, THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP MAY BELIEVE IT CAN CONTINUE TO GIVE SCANT REGARD TO ARAB OPINION. IN FACT, THE ISRAELIS MAY INTERPRET SADAT'S TRIP TO JERUSALEM AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS - "WHICH IT IS, IN A SENSE", HE ADDED A BIT RUEFULLY.

D. AS FOR THE TWO ISSUES THAT CHARGE MENTIONED AS THE MAIN ONES UNRESOLVED IN THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES DURING THE TALKS WITH DAYAN - WITHDRAWAL AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION - SULAIMAN CHALLENGED CHARGE'S CHARACTERIZATION THAT ONLY A "TEMPORARY IMPASSE" EXISTS. TO BEGIN WITH, THESE ARE THE KEY ISSUES, AND IF THERE'S AN IMPASSE HERE ONE CAN HARDLY BE OPTIMISTIC. MOREOVER, ISRAEL HAD ACTUALLY RETROGRESSED ON THE WITHDRAWAL ISSUE. THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT NO LONGER SEEMS TO ACCEPT WITHDRAWAL FROM BOTH THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. PREVIOUSLY, SUBSTANTIAL WITHDRAWAL ON BOTH FRONTS HAD BEEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED AS PART OF THE EVENTUAL PEACE. AS FOR THE PALESTINE QUESTION, SULAIMAN FELT THE ISRAELIS WERE TAKING ESSENTIALLY NO POSITION AT ALL. REMINDED OF PREMIER BEGIN'S "1#9.3 47)3" PROPOSALS, HE REPLIED THAT THESE LEFT EVERYTHING IMPORTANT IN ISRAELI HANDS. THE EARLIER HOPES ENGENDERED BY PRESIDENT CARTEY'S "HOMELAND" STATEMENT WERE PRETTY MUCH DASHED, HE BELIEVED. INTERESTINGLY, HOWEVER, SULAIMAN DID NOT

GO INTO THE NATURE OF THE "HOMELAND" HE ENVISAGED, AND IN FACT
THE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR ESTABLISHING IT DID NOT SEEM TO
MATTER TO HIM.

3. CHARGE THANKED SULAIMAN FOR HIS VIEWS, REITERATED THAT U.S.
GOVERNMENT IS FULLY COMMITTED TO THE PEACE PROCESS, AND STRESSED
HIS OWN CONVICTION THAT A SETTLEMENT WOULD COME WITH TIME.
SULAIMAN AGREED THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO PEACE.
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